

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Raise Your Children to Believe

Acts 2:39

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SermonAudio Blurb: There is a war on our children. And the battlefield is for their hearts and minds. And the enemy is Satan using many different entities to wage this war. But the methods are always the same if only we will have eyes to see and ears to hear. The Christian faith is to be passed on to our children and it is expected, and even commanded, that Christian parents do so.

I. Introduction.

- A. We are in a war.
 - 1. Spans to backward to almost the furthest reaches of time.
 - 2. It is a violent war that takes no prisoners and the cost is eternal.
 - 3. But it is also very subtle at times.
- B. In 2018 I started a series through Genesis 1-11 with the purpose to place in front of everyone here what the bible said and challenge each person to decide if they believed it.
 - 1. At the core is simply the infallibility, inerrancy and authority of the Word of God.
 - a. Infallible means it will not lead you into error and it is not capable of being in error.
 - b. Inerrant mean it is without errors in the original writings. It tells you the truth, even if what happened is evil.
 - c. Authoritative means just that, what it commands, describes, prohibits, etc is not to be rejected or adjusted.
 - 2. Ask people you know who claim Jesus Christ and ask them if they believe those chapters are true and right. You will be amazed at how many will say something other than yes.
 - 3. The reality of doctrinal movement.
 - a. One movement starts with a basic, sound doctrine but not a convinced bibliology, axiomatic rather than autopoietic.

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- b. The other starts perhaps with very weak doctrine but a convinced bibliology.
 - c. The first looks very good from the perspective of those outside. All the boxes ticked. But within it are all the ingredients for unbelief and apostasy.
 - d. The second looks like a mess to those observing. Almost none of the boxes are ticked. But within it are all the ingredients for growth and maturity.
 - e. Give me the second person anytime and every time. What churches and seminaries are producing are the first kind.
 - f. Parents want to raise the second.
- C. Read Acts 2:39.
- 1. There is a promise given to people called “you.” But not just them. To their children and to those far off.
 - 2. In the context Peter is speaking to the Jews who were believing the gospel. And therefore the children are Jewish children.
 - 3. And those who are far off are Gentiles, in other words, you and I.
 - 4. There is a fourth group not mentioned but it is present as well. It is our children.
- D. What I want to do in my sermon is emphasized the idea that children are to be raised in and under the gospel message and faith.
- 1. I don't want it to be so much of a review as it is an exhortation to go and be a faithful parent for the long haul. I want us to look and act toward our children and grandchildren with eyes and hands of faith.
 - 2. Too often we parent as if we expect our children to not believe. We allow them a lot of space—too much space—because we claim that they are not believers therefore they can't obey. This is untrue and it needs to be rejected by Christian parents.
- E. At the core all I am saying today is Genesis 3:1.
- 1. The question is not really do you believe the bible, but do you believe God? The serpent asked Eve a simple question: “Indeed, has God said....”
 - 2. This is so fundamental to the Christian faith and therefore it is always where the attack against the Christian faith begins.

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3. Too often this begins in the home and this cannot be if you hope to raise children to believe.
 4. What lies do you tolerate? What lies are you telling? How ruthless are you in loving what is true and hating all that encroaches upon that truth? This is what I want to speak on today.
- F. Today I want to plead with you to enter the battle for your children. To see that the enemy is not outside, but inside the gates. The gates of your home and the gates of the Church.
1. This is not the time for the timid, for the weak, and for the fearful.
 2. “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (1 Cor. 16:13)

II. The Promise Is for Your Children, so Fight for It.

- A. My first point is that our battle is over truth.
1. In 2018 I started a series through Genesis 1-11 with the purpose to push in front of you every week what the bible says about the beginning of this world, humanity and its history.
 - a. Go to almost any major evangelical college or seminary and you will find these chapters minimized, adjusted, and ignored in most cases.
 - b. Go into most evangelical churches and you will find the same today.
 2. Truth. Pilate asked Jesus that very question.
 - a. “Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’” (Jn. 18:37-38)
 - b. Jesus says that truth sets us free. We question what is true.
 - c. Jesus says in John 17 that God’s Word is truth. We says we are too busy to read the bible to our children.
 - d. God says in Psalm 119:9 that a young man keeps pure by conforming to the Word. We can’t quite find time to memorize passages to teach our children.

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- e. God tells us in Titus 2:1 to speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. We can't quite define what sound doctrine is.
3. Truth is found only in God. Remove God from anything and truth is not longer present.
 - a. The evil of education is not that it teaches gender fluidity or radical socialism.
 - b. The real evil is that it thinks it can teach truth without acknowledging God is at the core of all things.
 - c. If you believe that history, mathematics or logic can be rightly understood without the God who made all of them, you are already given to unbelief.
4. Many today call themselves Christian but are really mere atheists, practical atheists.
 - a. In one way, all sin is simply atheism. Most definitely the sin we hide from others. Because, like good atheists, when we hide sin we show that we believe that God cannot see or that He is not present in our deepest thoughts and loves.
 - b. This is a battle every Christian has, to **constantly repent** and **constantly remind** themselves they serve and follow God first.
 - c. To ignore this battle will inevitably lead to apostasy. To say it another way, to habitually love your sin is to ultimately reveal that you are an actual atheist.
 - d. How often have you heard these passages and decided they must refer to someone else?
 - (1) "They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." (Tit. 1:16)
 - (2) "The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 Jn. 2:4)
 - e. A simple mark of true belief is a life of repentance. And the reason is that repentance happens because you believe God and that His Word is true. And so you repent.

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5. This repentance includes your home and your children. Fight for what is true.
6. 1 Timothy 1:18-19.
 - a. What is the command? It is found in vs 3.
 - (1) A hard task and an unpleasant one, but it is necessary.
 - (2) And why did Paul need to tell Timothy to do this? Because the men in Ephesus shirked their duty to do so themselves.
 - (3) So evil entered the church and evil began to do its work.
 - b. Is it any different for your home?
 - c. It is a “good” fight. There are all sorts of things you can fight for and over. But is that fight a “good” fight?
 - (1) “Good” = of value, noble, pleasing to God.
 - (2) The word we get for “Fight” is the same word we get “strategy” from.
 - (3) What is more noble than laying out a clear strategy in your home that helps define for you what will and will not be allowed? What you will praise and what you will rebuke? What you will value and what you will despise?
 - (4) When we are fighting over the souls of our children with the Gospel of God, we are involved in the good fight.
 - (5) Your children are absorbing lies every day. You are either every day resisting those lies and speaking truth or you are not.
 - (6) Voddie Baucham said it well when he said, “We cannot continue to send our children to Caesar for the education and be surprised when they come home as Romans.”
 - d. Notice he gives Timothy, and us, the tools for this fight (14).
 - (1) First, keeping faith.
 - (a) Notice it is not “the” faith, but faith. This is not speaking of the body of teaching that makes up the Christian faith.

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- (b) Rather it is that subjective exercising of trust in the gospel, holding fast to Jesus Christ that is in view.
 - (c) It is a remembering that salvation and forgiveness is found in Jesus alone.
 - (d) It is a remembering that Jesus is truly Lord, and that all authority rests in Him alone.
 - (e) It is a remembering that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead and to make all things right.
- (2) Second, keeping a good conscience.
- (a) This is the practical application of keeping your faith in Jesus.
 - (b) It is something we all have, but for the Christian it is a powerful instrument that either strengthens us or weakens us in our fight.
 - (c) A good conscience is one that is knowing that you are forgiven by God and then living as if you are.
 - (d) That would mean battling sin, fighting for the faith, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and such.
 - (e) It is being faithful to what you say you believe.
- e. Beloved, your children and grandchildren need to see this.
- (1) They don't need to see you merely preaching to them. They need to see your faith in what you say and what you do. As James said, show your faith by your works.
 - (2) They need to see that what you believe is of supreme value. That nothing gets in front of it or above it.
 - (3) You may say that it is too late for you. That is only true if your child is dead. It is never too late to repent while you and they both live.
 - (4) But if you are saying that it is too late my question to you is whether you really believe it? Or is it possible you just are not yet ready to hate all that you have allowed in your life and home that is in opposition to Christ?

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- (5) It is very hard to tell your child to trust in Christ when all they see in you is fear or anger or bitterness or greed or covetousness. When the fear of man is greater than a fear of the Lord then you are not in the good fight.
- B. My second point is, if you want to fight for what is true then raise your children to believe what is true.
1. Is it too much to ask that your children are to be raised in and under the gospel message and faith? Is this a pipe dream? Or is it the expectation of every Christian household?
 - a. Not wish.
 - b. Not desire.
 - c. Expectation.....
 2. In covenant families such as what you will get in a Lutheran or Presbyterian sort of household, you will find them treating the child as a believer. This is because they baptized the infant. Some will say they are in fact a believer while others will say they are to be treated as a believer even if they are not yet.
 3. In non-credo Baptist households we can easily treat our children like **non-Christians** because we understand that they have not yet made a profession of faith. But I believe this is improper and unwise. Let me explain.
 4. No where are we taught to raise our children in this manner in the Scripture.
 - a. They are to obey their parents in the Lord. They are to honor their parents because God blesses those who honor their parents.
 - b. Mom and Dad are to raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - c. Nowhere do you see that parents are to wait until the child professes Christ. Rather, from day one you are to raise them in the Lord.
- C. This is part of what it looks like to have a household of faith. This sort of household first holds to sound doctrine.

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1. So this means you are not vague in what you believe nor are you vague on why you believe. Husband and wife are people who live in accordance to God's word rather than the vagaries of this age.
 2. But second, you also live **in** faith. What this means is that you live in anticipation that God will work His grace in the lives of your children and your home.
 - a. This sort of household is always pointing to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in all things.
 - b. You are not pretending that the child is saved ; but you are also not assuming that the child will not believe and be saved.
 - c. You live in anticipation that the child will come and receive the Gospel because God has chosen your child to be born into a Christian home. But you also understand that the means of receiving the gospel is to hear it and know it and, I believe very importantly, watch it grow in the lives of their parents.
 3. This sort of parenting is powerful because it captures all facets of the life of your child.
 - a. Physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual aspects are all brought under God's truth.
 - b. They are taught to look at all of creation, including their minds and bodies, and see it through a God-centered perspective.
- D. Therefore, my third point is don't be like children in your parenting.
1. Three times Paul talks to the messed up Corinthian church regarding childish thinking.
 2. In 3:1 he says that he can't approach them as adults but as babes in Christ. Immaturity in an adult is never a good thing.
 3. In 13:11 he speaks of when he became a man he put away childish thinking. But the implication is that they had not.
 4. So in 14:20 he then says that they are not to be children in their thinking. Rather in evil they should be babes and in their thinking they should be mature.

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5. Your children need adults who live like adults, think like adults and believe like adults.
- E. Children don't think things through. They are told not to touch something because it is hot, so they touch it. Mature people understand how things work and so they consider everything necessary before they act.
- F. With that in mind, think of the battle lines that are involved in fighting for the souls of your children. Four lines, creating a box that is always pressing in toward us.
 1. The first is the sin in our own hearts, from birth we are brought forth in iniquity/sin.
 2. The second is the sin in our children's heart.
 3. The third is a world system that is utterly opposed to God and truth (Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 2:1-2).
 - a. "who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1:4)
 - b. "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world. . . ." (Eph. 2:1-2a)
 4. The fourth is Satan, who blinds the eyes of the unbeliever so that they cannot see the glory of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:4)
 5. Peter looked out at that massive crowd on the Day of Pentecost and he saw a people, called by God's name, who had forgotten the promises.
 6. What about you?
 7. Keep the gospel center, but never just teach the gospel. Preach and live the consequences of the gospel. Especially the part that He is returning. Your children need to see this. Not as a comment occasionally in your home, but literally lived out before them.

III. Conclusion.

- A. A series of random thoughts:
 1. Do not disparage the power of the gospel even when your child rebels.

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2. Never abandon biblical convictions to merely make memories. But also don't forget to make memories that are worth remembering. Give your children an overflowing wellspring of examples to remember as they go forth into the world.
3. We teach our children to be discontent because we are discontent.
4. When we complain about being a mother or father we are merely saying we cannot or will not do what God commands us to do. It is the same with your health or your employment. God has ordained this life and you are called to honor Him by living it to His glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31)
5. When we defend sin and call it trauma or anxiety or whatnot we declare to our children that God is not serious. Trauma is the new buzzword. It is born out of victimhood and not consistent with our identity in Jesus Christ. If you define yourself or your children using trauma/victim language you need to develop a strong theology of suffering.
6. We communicate what we believe by what we treat as nonnegotiable. What we prioritize. What we love. What we become angry about. What we enjoy. What we spend and invest in.
7. We parent too often in fear and unbelief and it shows in our homes and children. What are you plowing into them?
8. We fight battles that don't exist, slaying dragons that are made of plastic. (2 Cor. 10:3-6)
9. We create a separation between faith and life. As if they can exist separately. This is how you raise a pagan.
10. Woe to parents who practice Isaiah 5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"
11. What is a masculine man and what is a feminine female is? Are your standards this age or in accordance to scripture?
12. What does a house look like where Christ is Lord? It is a place where you own it and embrace it as where God has placed you. It is your small part of this world that you are to bring into submission to you. And the assumption is that you are coming into ever increasing submission to God. So your children are your task.

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13. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7 You must establish a home that fears the Lord if you want to raise children to believe.
 14. Parents start young. *"When I was a son to my father, Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, Then he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; Keep my commandments and live;"* Proverbs 4:3-4.
- B. Never underestimate the power of an example (1 Peter 2:21ff).
1. Notice that immediately after this Peter goes to the subject of wives, husbands, enduring persecution, fearing God rather than man, and then back into suffering again.
 2. We have our Lord who brought life and forgiveness to us through His death and resurrection. Take this and teach it to your children when they are one, when they are 10 and when they are 18.

Benediction

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- What, in your own opinion, are the challenges facing Christian parents today in America? If you are a parent, what are the top three non-negotiables in your household? Why are these the top three?
- What are things you did not know because your parents did not teach them to you with a Christian worldview? How are you establishing changes in your parenting to strengthen what is lacking?